



MISSOURI SENATE

JEFFERSON CITY

Delbert Scott
28th Senate District

CAPITOL BUILDING, ROOM 221
JEFFERSON CITY, MO 65101

**A Weekly Column for the
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**Contact: Debbie Poire
(573) 751-8793**

Giving Thanks

JEFFERSON CITY – We have come upon that time of the year that allows us to briefly put on hold our daily worries and gain perspective on what means the most to each of us. As we prepare to gather with our loved ones for the Thanksgiving holiday, we can focus on those things that make us who we are – our friends, family and faith. The holiday also is part of who we are as Americans.

What we celebrate as Thanksgiving is traditionally tied to a three-day feast hosted by the Pilgrims after their first harvest in 1621. After a long winter that claimed many lives in their first year at Plymouth Colony, the Pilgrims nevertheless held a celebration to give thanks for God's blessings. The colonists invited Native Americans from the surrounding areas and enjoyed a menu of wild fowl, venison, seafood, squash and corn, among other dishes.

The Pilgrims held a day of thanksgiving again in 1623. After that, a tradition began in Plymouth and other New England colonies of setting aside a day to give thanks for the autumn harvest. Although the tradition was not observed every year, it persisted throughout the rest of the 17th century and became a foundation of a maturing colonial landscape.

During the Revolutionary War, the Continental Congress appointed one or more Thanksgiving days each year except for 1777. In that year, revolutionary commander George Washington declared the holiday in December as a victory celebration for the defeat of the British at Saratoga.

Washington again issued proclamations of the Thanksgiving holiday in 1789 and 1795, this time as the president of a young nation.

However, it was not until another war, one with an equally important effect on the development of our nation, that Thanksgiving Day was proclaimed a national holiday. Influenced by a series of appeals by Sarah Josepha Hale, Abraham Lincoln issued a proclamation on Oct. 3, 1863, citing “the blessings of fruitful fields and healthful skies” amid a “civil war of unequalled magnitude and severity.”

As we rub our stuffed bellies and flip through football games on Thanksgiving Day, I urge everyone to remain focused on what this day truly means. Those who came before us did not have much, yet they knew to give thanks for what they did have.

Let us focus on the blessings of life and liberty, of family and friends, and of the privilege we have of living in this land of plenty.

If you have questions or comments about this or any other issue, please feel free to contact me at 573-751-8793 or by e-mail at: delbertscott@senate.state.mo.us

Senator Delbert Scott represents the people of Barton, Benton, Cedar, Dallas, Henry, Hickory, Pettis, Polk and St. Clair counties in the Missouri Senate.